

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

19th District News

2004 Legislative Session



Senator

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Toll-free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000 TDD (for hearing-impaired): 1-800-635-9993 Dear neighbors,

How can we create jobs? What's the best way to give our children a better future?

It's natural to worry about those questions. We're committed to finding answers, to breaking through partisan gridlock in Olympia to pass common-sense reforms.

Workers and businesses in the 19th District are fighting for survival.

It's our job to win a race to the top, to give our kids the world's best education and to retrain our workers so they get the best jobs, the kind you can raise a family on with health coverage and retirement benefits.

Inside this newsletter, you'll find details about reforms to improve our schools, create jobs and fix health care.

We're interested in what you think – and in your family's experiences with these three issues. If you share your story with us, we can read it as testimony in committee or on the floor of the House and Senate when we debate these issues.

Thank you for the honor and privilege of serving as your representatives to the Legislature.

As always, we welcome your ideas, comments and questions.

Sincerely yours,

Mark DoumitState Senator

19th Legislative District

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Brian Hatfield

State Representative 19th Legislative District Brian Blake

State Representative 19th Legislative District

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Senator Mark Doumit

Representative Brian Hatfield Representative Brian Blake

THE BEST EDUCATION

Education is our top priority. The state constitution says it's our paramount duty, and in today's economy education is the foundation for prosperity.

We've been pushing hard to keep faith with the voters, who passed two initiatives (I-728 and I-32) to improve our schools, reduce overcrowded classrooms and give teachers better pay. And we're fighting for better retraining and college opportunities so our workers can get the best jobs.

RETRAINING

There's an immediate need for laid-off pulp, paper and aluminum workers to get top-quality retraining. We're working on legislation to secure that training.



It's also time to get smart about this issue and recognize that an ever-changing economy means workers will need to switch fields four or five times in their careers. Our education system isn't truly set up to handle this, and it needs to be reformed to make it easier for all workers to come back to school and update their skills.

COLLEGE

A college degree is the surest ticket to the American Dream, and every student or worker willing to study hard deserves a shot at that dream.

We need to break down the barriers standing in the way. Those barriers include:



- High drop-out rates Half the students who enter college drop out before getting their degree. And one out of three high school students drop out. That's a huge waste of human potential and brainpower. Our goal should be having the best graduation rates in the nation. If you start high school or college, you finish. End of story.
- Better local facilities The 19th District is hundreds of miles from our state's major universities. That's tough on students, especially working dads and moms going back to school to change careers. We're working hard to find money for better college labs and facilities at Lower Columbia College, Grays Harbor College and the WSU extension in Vancouver.
- Giving everyone a shot at the American Dream — In 2008, the largest class of high school seniors in our history will start knocking on college doors. Those doors will stay shut unless we start making room for 30,000 more seats in our college lecture halls and labs. It's wrong to tell an entire generation of students that they can't earn a college degree, the surest ticket to the American Dream.
- More affordable tuition Who has \$4,000 sitting in their checking account? That's how

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much tuition costs these days at our state universities. It's almost \$20,000 at private colleges. Thirty years ago, you could work a part-time or summer job to pay your way through college. You can't today. We need strong reforms to make college more affordable for everyday families.

SIMPLE MAJORITY FOR SCHOOLS

Why is it that 55 percent is a landslide for a politi-

cian while 59 percent of the vote is a failure for your local school? It's time to end the practice of making it hardest on our schools to pass anything at the ballot box.

We support a reform to let schools pass levies with a simple majority – 50 percent – instead



of today's supermajority of 60 percent. This reform would make it easier for our communities to fix old and overcrowded schools.

THE BEST JOBS FAMILY BUSINESSES

The 19th District was built by logging, fishing and farming. We're not like Seattle where a single giant corporation – Boeing in years past and Microsoft today – dominates everything.

Family businesses create most of the jobs in our communities. So improving one of the best ways to

boost our economy is by helping our small businesses grow and thrive.

That means:

- cutting the red tape that tangles every small business owner
- making it more affordable for family businesses to offer health coverage to workers,
- producing high school and college graduates with the skills needed by small businesses.

PIPES AND PAVEMENT

Every business needs infrastructure: roads and rail lines to get goods to market; power lines and cables for high speed Internet; water pipes and stormsewer service.

There's a great reform in the Legislature that can help our communities build the infrastructure that creates jobs. This reform lets local governments use property-tax revenue to pay for the improvements they need to create those jobs.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Spartina weed and the green crab are just two of the foreign invaders threatening our waters. For years, we've fought with federal and state bureaucrats to solve this problem.

This session, we'll continue to work on solutions to rid the 19th District of all invasive species threatening the jobs of our natural resource businesses.

THE BEST HEALTH CARE

It's an injustice that folks who work hard and play by the rules can't afford health insurance for their families. Pouring salt on that wound is the fact your tax dollars pay the bill for free health care for convicts at Walla Walla.

We need real reforms that make health coverage more affordable for all: for everyday workers, for kids and for our seniors.

Senator Mark Doumit

TAKE A MACHETE TO **ALL THE RED TAPE**

Ask your doctor about paperwork. Most doctors have to pay a full-time worker who spends all day wrestling with piles of paperwork from all the different HMO's and government programs. It's a nightmare.



Some experts say paperwork and administration costs eat up 30 cents of every dollar you spend on health care. That makes the federal government look efficient, since Medicare spends 2 cents on administration and 98 cents on actual doctors and health care for patients.

We have to pass strong reforms to slice through all this red tape before it strangles our health care system.

PATIENT SAFETY

Doctors need relief from malpractice insurance costs. Some are quitting or moving their practice because of the costs, especially for high-risk practices like delivering babies.

We should learn from other states and not repeat their mistakes. Places like California tried to solve this problem by limiting your right to a jury trial. It hasn't worked; doctors are actually paying more in states that passed this so-called reform.

A better solution is to attack the problem by preventing the medical errors that lead to malpractice suits.

- today, rules prevent hospitals from sharing information about medical errors that lead to patient injuries or death and to save lives those rules need to change
- a tiny minority of bad doctors cause the majority of all malpractice lawsuits, so there's no reason your good family doctor who's never been sued should pay the high costs caused by the negligence of a handful of bad practitioners who don't belong in the profession

SAFER NEIGHBORHOODS

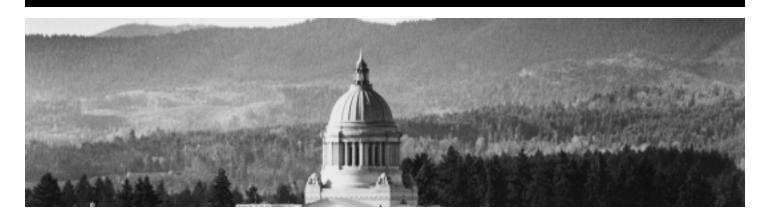
For years, the state has cut support for our local police officers and sheriff deputies while piling on more costs in the form of unfunded mandates.

It's causing a budget crisis for our local counties and cities, with criminal justice costs eating 70 percent of county budgets. And every year, the problem gets worse.

This session, we're introducing legislation to give cities and counties more flexibility to fund local law enforcement.



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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Your opinion matters. We'd like to hear from you, whether it's a question about an issue, an idea you have for legislation or to tell your family's story.

You can contact us by phone, letter or e-mail. We read every message from citizens from the 19th District and make it a priority to respond as quickly as possible.

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Committees and Leadership:

Senator Mark Doumit

- Assistant Democratic Whip
- Ranking Democrat Parks, Fish & Wildlife
- Natural Resources, Energy & Water
- Coastal Caucus
- Ways & Means

Representative **Brian Hatfield**

- Majority Floor Leader
- Transportation
- Financial Institutions & Insurance
- Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
- Rules
- Chair Coastal Caucus

Representative Brian Blake

- Capital Budget
- Technology, Telecommunications & Energy
- Trade & Economic Development
- Coastal Caucus

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